BALLET TODAY

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BALLET TODAY

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EDITORIAL COMMENT

SADLER'S WELLS BALLET had its usual tremendous success at the Edinburgh Festival and there was not a seat to be had during the whole fortnight. I felt very strongly that this great interest came not only from the local audience and the visitors from other parts of Scotland, but from the thousands of people from the English provinces who quite genuinely made the appearance of the Ballet in Edinburgh their prinicpal reason for attending the Festival. I have long considered that the almost complete cessation of touring in this country since Sadler's Wells went to Covent Garden is a matter for great regret and a very bad thing for Ballet, and I hope that in 1949 this can be rectified. Admittedly there are now many towns which do not possess a theatre suitable for so large a company but there must still be at least a dozen most of which could rely on packed houses for two or even three weeks, for provincial ballet lovers would think nothing of travelling twenty, thirty or forty miles to see them. A tour of the United Kingdom (and I cannot imagine that Dublin and Belfast would not also be delighted to have them) could easily look after four or five months and would help to solve some of the problems which result from the over-long continuous season in London. There are a number of first-rate ballets which provincial audiences want to see which are not really suited to the Royal Opera House but which have to be kept in the repertoire because this is still of an insufficient size for the length of the season and the nature of the audience which is mainly made up of people who go again and again and therefore need constant variety. I know that it is a matter of commercial necessity that Covent Garden should not be closed for more than a very few weeks in the year and that the success of the Ballet has helped to carry the Opera along, but as recent announcements seem to show that Covent Garden cannot be made to pay anyway, it seems that 1949 would be a very good time to make some alterations. If Sadler's Wells can fill an enormous cinema in Croydon which is so close to London that the local balletomanes must certainly be regular members of the Opera House audience, then they can do the same anywhere they go throughout the country. I am always receiving letters from provincial readers asking me if there is any hope of a visit.

News comes of the great success of Yvette Chauviré with the Paris Opera Ballet at the New York City Center. This company took the place of Sadler's Wells at the International Dance Festival. Readers will remember that negotiations broke down when it was learned that the Metropolitan Opera House was not the theatre at which it was proposed our Company should appear. The Paris Opera Ballet with its long tradition has not, apparently, been worried by the fear of any loss of dignity. Incidentally there is a very good chance that this company will be our visitors at Covent Garden this year while Sadler's Wells pay a reciprocal visit to the Paris Opera. Their recent two weeks at the Théâtre de Champs-Elysées has given Paris audiences a preliminary peep. I hear that the thrifty French were a little stunned by the high prices charged, ranging from 200 to 800 francs, and this may account for the theatre being by no means full on the first night, September 21st. A friend writes to say that Margot Fonteyn had an ovation on her entrance and danced superbly in *Scènes de Ballet* and *Symphonic Variations*, the latter being the success of the programme which included *Checkmate* and the *Blue Bird pas de deux* with Elvin and Rassine. He adds that it was a wonderful performance of *Symphonic Variations* and that at the end "the flowers for Fonteyn equalled those on a Covent Garden 'last night' and she deserved every one".

Later came the news of the tremendous success of *Le Lac des Cygnes*, the full version of which opened the second week, though it seems the theatre continues not to be full.

When the Company return from Germany they will again appear at the Davis Theatre, Croydon, for two weeks from October 18th, after which there will be a week of rehearsals before their re-appearance at Covent Garden for another long season. One wonders a little at the policy of a management which refused to allow Sadler's Wells Ballet to appear in New York except at the Metropolitan Opera House, yet allows them to dance in the London suburbs immediately prior to their London season, which opens on November 25th with *Don Juan* the new Ashton ballet. This is to the Richard Strauss tone poem, with a décor by Edward Burra, and Robert Helpmann will appear in the title role with Margot Fonteyn and Moira Shearer as the feminine leads. *Cinderella* is at present scheduled for December 22nd though I hear this may be altered. This also is an Ashton ballet for which he is using the

(*Continued on page* 30)

SEVEN VEILS WILL NOT SUFFICE

By CARYL BRAHMS

TO say that the gallant gallery-goer descended slightly stunned by disappointment from the opening of the Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo, this year's summer offering at the Garden, would be to fob the archives off with an understatement. Indeed I have rarely noted so stony and reserved a reaction from the rigorous reaches of the house.

This Franco-Russo-Americano company was led by two artists of the first virtuosity, Hightower and Eglevsky, supported by that fine dancer, Skibine, the charming but mishap-magnetic Ethéry ("It-had-to-happen-to-me") Pagava, and Marjorie Tallchief, strenuous but innately feminine, with a *corps de ballet* that ambled wanly through threadbare sets in ballets by distinguished choreographers, each coryphée counting, no doubt, after her own fashion, but never that of her companions, nor of the conductor. And since a choreographer, however distinguished, can have his disheartened moments (how else account for some of the works we are invited to see, come snow, come sunshine?) and that when this happens, so does a critic, I propose to discuss the dancers first and the works they have danced in second—an order to which I hope never to have recourse again.

To begin with, then, Rosella Hightower. Here is a dancer of the first importance. An artist of great power and friendliness, and courage. And if there is still much to improve in the presentation and finish of her work, Hightower is an improving dancer: and, with experience in the right kind of company, and with the right kind of Russian schooling—finishing schooling, of course—she should become an international ballerina.

Hightower has a technique which is so readily accomplished that she can afford to allow us to forget it and, indeed, she continually subordinates it to the feeling of her roles. Her appearance on scene is not so instantly dramatic as Nora Kaye's. She does not glitter like Fonteyn. She does not move me as Markova has moved me: quietly—unfailingly. But, appropriately enough, Hightower is an artist of such high and towering courage that I have no doubt but that she will shed her wristiness, her small provincialisms, and her occasional gawkish imperfections. Then it is that we shall see Hightower emerge as a ballerina whose technique, whose temperament, and whose strong sense of drama will add up to that lode-star of the great artist—authority.

Eglevsky continues to be a museum-piece of accurate movement. His performances are technically impeccable. But his work is as lacking in excitement as it is in flow. One can sit back and exult in a series of miraculously achieved and energetically executed feats by this apparently sleepy Slav, but one cannot be fired by them as one can by the work of some less technically immaculate, more technically fallible, but more emotional dancer.

The work of Skibine has given the connoisseur great pleasure this season. Here is a leading dancer with line and flow, elevation, lightness, and precision, not to mention a great deal of quiet tact. But Skibine's work suffers from the defects of this last great quality; for he lacks the personality and the scintillant edge and magnetism of the star dancer. But for the ballet-goer who can make-do without stardust, Skibine's appearances are occasions of singular satisfaction.

Ethéry Pagava has all the charm that we are beginning to associate with the newest school of French Ballet. Clearly she delights in dancing and so delights us. Let us hope that fate will relent and allow us to see more of this most accidental of artists—for her frequent mishaps are a calamity to her and a great disappointment to us.

Marjorie Tallchief is an exponent of the strenuous school. But she does not allow the fiercely athletic pyrotechnics she is called on to perform to take the place of feminine glamour. A plucky, useful, submissive dancer, she lacks those qualities of spirit that bear the soloist up to the realms of the ballerina.

* * *

Lacking all vestige of inspired—or even moderately competent—artistic direction the company danced their depressed and ill-dressed way before threadbare backcloths that would have raised an eyebrow at a one-night stand.

Over *Les Sylphides* I will draw seven veils.

Over *Lac des Cygnes*, seven veils will not suffice. Only once have I seen a batch of worse-drilled swans, and they were the real thing!

Giselle was notable only for the feeling and simplicity Hightower brought to Act One, and the simplicity and technical dexterity she deployed in Act Two.

So much for the classics.

Writing at the end of the third week of the season, there have been three works only that I have wanted to see a second time—*The Mute Wife*, a gay little ballet by Cobos, a choreographer new to Europe, in which a sorrowing bride loses her tongue but finds her castanets; *Noir et Blanc*, a tribute to Petipa by Lifar; and *Les Biches*, revised by Nijinska.

The best thing about *The Mute Wife*, was its workmanlike choreography, spare and spiced with wit, and the fact that there was no *corps de ballet* but a small ensemble

ROSELLA HIGHTOWER AND GEORGE SKIBINE IN "CONCERTO BAROCCO" A BALLET BY GEORGE BALANCHINE

Action photographs by Duncan Melvin

ANTONIA COBOS IN HER OWN BALLET "THE MUTE WIFE"

of dancers who knew what they were about and promptly set about it.

Noir et Blanc is by far the best ballet that Lifar has had presented in this country. It does, for the classical manner, much what Ashton's *Scènes de Ballet* did for twentieth century romanticism. Lifar's use of lighting and its effect upon the movement and grouping of his concert of black and white dancers is an interesting conception in impersonal balletics. The work is never less than lovely in line, and unfailingly impressive in design.

Les Biches is the blue-print of a once-wonderful work. Only Poulenc's nostalgic music is left untouched by the years to take us back to Diaghilev's super-sophisticated ballet of the bordel—that, and the half-remembered remnants of Nijinska's magnificent choreography; a thing of line and subtle nuance and acid wit. And there was still Marie Laurencin's *fausse-naïve* backcloth. Her costumes have been modernised—their period flavour has gone with the waist-line and the new garments are crudely matched and crudely lit.

But even in half-remembered blue-print, this work retains at least a part of its old magic—those ineffable moments of pure Ballet, with their line, and nuance, and emotion, that have never been surpassed, in the genre.

Save for the fact that I have yet to see *Night Shadow* and *Colloque Sentimentale*, the rest is silence—a crabbed and curdled, oysterlike silence, for it is an embittering sight to see a Hightower, or a Skibine so ill-presented, so ill-supported, and so poorly served. And it has infuriated me to find our staunchest Covent Gardeners paying good money to peer down from that vasty height upon artistic paucity on two successive summer seasons.

* * *

Silence is Gold, as Messieurs Clair and Chevalier have so charmingly reminded us in another place. But the great thing about gold is that it is expendable. And *Night Shadow*, the Balanchine-Bellini ballet, which I have seen since writing what was to have been the final paragraph of this résumé, seems the perfect reason for me to break my silence into some handy silver pieces. For this proved to be the most exciting new ballet I have seen at Covent Garden since Antony Tudor's *Pillar of Fire*.

The music, borrowed from Bellini by Rieti, a rich stream of sound, with cross-currents of strange dissonances that shake the heart, and a main flow of long romantic strain that exalts it, bears the ballet lightly, evocatively, to a moonlit *bal masque*, such as Balanchine delights to delight us in, with its heightened significances and its tender relationships, poignantly impermanent, born to be shattered by the first shaft of the sun. Through it paces a poet, at the mercy of the moon, the mood, the moment. And to him descends a figure that will be remembered long after this ballet, with its unequal but, at its best, superb realisations, has passed from recollection. She is *La Somnambule*, more Lady Macduff than Lady Macbeth, and unawakened in the simplest sense of the word, but leading the ballet by the light of her candle to its inevitable catastrophe, no less than that other, that greatest of all social climbers, that most ambitious of ladies of the lamp, led Shakespeare's play to its dark threshold and beyond. I believe that, like *Petrouchka*, *La Somnambule* will pass into whatever permanency the Ballet may command. For the puppet-like automacy of the sleep-walker commends itself to choreography, as bird-song to a bird, or as a barrow to a spiv, or as grey hairs to the temple of a diplomat.

And to this poem in music and movement, Rimbaudian in its implication and of the texture of Tennyson's Skibine, the Poet, brings something more than line and lightness and a romantic attitude or two—he brings, too, an ability to recognize a great theatrical moment and to live in it with grace and with its own kind of lime-lit nobility. And Pagava subdues her charm into the Poet's vision of the pristine following puppet-like the path of Fate—a path which she treads with the simple acceptance of the future great artist she should become.

PETER REVITT'S BALLET GUYED (No. 1)

ROSELLA HIGHTOWER IN "THE BLACK SWAN"

ON NOT ACTING WITH THE FACE

By MARY CLARKE

MY title is not strictly accurate: this plea is rather for acting with the body than against acting with ıe face, but if the other title were used most readers ould probably say "Oh yes, of course a dancer acts ith his whole body" and turn over quickly. The fact :mains that most modern dancers do not act with any ırt of their anatomy lower than the neck.

In England we pride ourselves on having brilliant :tor-dancers, indeed we often boast of our companies' :ting ability at the expense of their dancing and it is ways sufficient excuse for a thoroughly bad dancer if e can be described as a "useful mime". But even in ngland, acting is seldom of the true balletic genre hich renders the whole body expressive. (This is ot to say that no actor outside ballet is required to ave an expressive body, but since the actor has words illumine his character he does not need to rely holly, as does the dancer, on bodily eloquence. Vhen an actor does possess a completely expressive ody as well as command of the other facets of his craft e does, however, become proportionately greater and here occur phenomena like Irving's walk and Alfred unt's back.)

It is easy to trace the reasons for this concentration n facial expressiveness in the English dancer. In the arly days of English ballet any kind of talent for the tage was seized upon and expressive faces were so rare mong dancers that Miss de Valois may well have been mpressed when she first saw Mr. Helpmann's. Sadler's Vells Theatre has a large seating capacity but the seats re so closely packed that no-one in the audience is a reat distance from the stage. Facial expression is lear even in the gallery and at the back of the pit. \t the New Theatre, during the war years, the audience noved even closer to the stage and it was at the New heatre that a great many of the soloists who now form he mainstay of the present Sadler's Wells Ballet gained heir formative stage experience. Dancing large-scale allets in a small theatre was almost certain to be- ueath legacies of mannerisms which would be un- uited to Covent Garden and to distort the balance of alletic mime by placing undue emphasis on the ability f a dancer to convey character, mood, actual situation, y expressive facial contortions. When every flicker f an eyelid tells to the back of the gallery, the temp- ation to exploit flickering eyelids is too great to be esisted. At the New Theatre minutiæ of facial novements were used with tremendous effect by all the company. It won them their reputations as "dancers who could act" but it was the worst possible training for genuine character dancing.

This development of detail might well have caused disaster when the company moved to Covent Garden, but sufficient good sense was shown in the selection of ballets native to the company which were revived there to avoid the issue. It must be emphasised, in this connexion, that the failure of a ballet in any company's repertoire to "come over" in the further reaches of Covent Garden does not brand that ballet in itself as a failure; it may be simply a question of un- suitable environment. Many ballets make the transition surprisingly well, but if one stops to think about their construction the surprise diminishes. *Jardin aux Lilas*, the most interesting example, could move from the tiny Mercury stage to the Opera House with success because the choreography is built on simple clear lines which are uncrowded in a restricted area and yet beautiful when surrounded with space. There is no fussy detail of movement, and the most moving moment in the entire ballet is when, for a few seconds, all the dancers stand quite still. It is ballets of complicated situation expressed in complicated and restricted mimetic action—with an emphasis on the face rather than on the body—which, to my mind, fail to reach beyond the stalls at Covent Garden.

For the stalls, in all great opera houses, are the only place where the dancer's face is vividly seen by the audience. Diaghilev is said to have reminded his ballerinas that beyond the first few rows of the stalls the face was unimportant—what was being done with the body was what counted—and it is only necessary to watch performances on alternate nights from stalls and gallery to find out which dancers heed his advice. With the truly expressive artist, indeed, no "face" is necessary! A mask does not obscure his art and he may even change his colour without losing his power. The success of the mime plays of Deburau was built upon the character of Pierrot where the man's face is almost painted out beneath the heavy white make-up. The emotions were conveyed by primary expressions only—lips pursed or stretched, drooped in anguish or parted in ecstasy—and the genius of Deburau came not only from making this mask articulate but from the expressiveness of his body, shrouded, itself, in the loose Pierrot costume.

It is only one remove from this stylised mime to

Petrouchka. Again the face is painted out but a great Petrouchka is still one of the most moving characters in all ballet. Indeed the number of examples of this kind of role in the old Russian Ballet repertoire is prodigious: a whole glorious gallery comes to mind and one remembers swagger and bounce and roll, haughty disdain or drunken stumble entirely in terms of moving *bodies*, never as mobile countenances. A great character dancer does, of course, have an expressive face *as well* but ideally it is only a part of the speaking body and never a superior component which overshadows the rest. Massine, for instance, today the greatest character dancer of them all, can say more with his shoulders and hands than can most actors with a whole vocabulary witness *The Red Shoes*!) and the legs of Danilova have always rivalled even her most lovely face in eloquence. At the end of *The Rake's Progress* it is Helpmann's sagging shoulders as much as his twitching eyelids which suggest idiocy; Dolin's proud carriage alone establishes his royalty in any princely role; while Jean Babilée's body seems to change itself at will from a misshapen mass in *Le Rendezvous* to a godlike radiance in *Les Amours de Jupiter*.

"Heavy" character, perhaps, is easier for the dancer than ballets of slight mood or unemphasised character. It is only the finest artists who can achieve the delicacy of nuance which Sally Gilmour gives to Caroline in *Jardin aux Lilas* or which Fonteyn suggests in *Nocturne* and Elvin finds in the Young Girl's solo in *The Rake's Progress*. And when it comes to the purely classical solo or an abstract modern ballet the greatest difficulty arises. *What* can the dancer do with his face? It is a question which obviously torments most dancers from the moment they set foot on the stage and it results in an alarming collection of fierce grimaces, sickly smiles or frowns of furious concentration. One of the first qualities that mark out a young dancer of promise is this ability to control the face and assemble it into a pleasing and natural expression. The *raison d'être* of a classical solo, after all, is the solo and any dancer who attempts to draw attention to his facial contortions will detract from the effect of his performance. A beautiful example of the simplicity of expression best suited to a dancer is Ram Gopal's calm composure of countenance which varies but seldom and is therefore lit all the more brightly when he does smile. Markova too relies on remarkable economy of expression: a gentle serenity is the basis which years of experience have taught her is the best mirror in which to reflect passing emotions. At the other end of the scale, little Margaret Auld Nelson in *Oklahoma*! found a happy composure that was in its very simplicity and naturalness extraordinarily moving.

Simplicity, of course, in this case as in so many, is the clue to success. If a dancer is genuinely feeling something about a solo that feeling will show in his

COVER YUREK SHABELEVSKY'S FACE AND EVERY LINE IS STILL THE GOLDEN NEGRO IN "SCHEHERAZADE"

or her dancing without any straining to transfer the emotion to the face. My heart goes out to many male dancer as he stands locked in fifth position waiting to begin a solo—indeed so few dancers have eve looked anything but slightly ridiculous at this poin that I usually avert embarrassed eyes until they are actually in motion—but if the dancer happens to be a great one, well versed in controlling his expression and uniting it with the carriage of his body, tha moment can be one of the most rewarding in all ballet Will anyone who has seen it ever forget the confidence yet humility of Babilée's *révérence* before dancing the Blue Bird variation; the magnificence of Eglevsky collecting himself into a perfect fifth position; or the quiet assurance of Skibine?

Wonderful examples of the completely expressive dancer crowd in. In another genre there was Orlov, last year, dancing the Drummer Boy solo in *Graduation Ball*, his whole body seeming to tingle and glow with exhilaration and crowned by his dazzling smile. Then, two years ago, Jerome Robbins walking across the stage in *Three Virgins and a Devil* and giving a very dull ballet one gloriously comic moment; and little Simone Mostovoye with her sturdy childishness in *Les Forains*; and Alexander Grant with his despairing shoulders in the first scene of *Mam'zelle Angot*.

(*Continued on page 13*)

FIRST STEPS IN BALLETOMANIA

By DENIS THOMAS

The Russian Problem

When I was knee-high to a baby ballerina, Diaghilev[1] ook me on his knee and said very solemnly: " My child, nen you grow up and start taking dancers out to pper, whatever you do, *never get their names mixed up*." an think of no sounder advice for the initial guidance anyone who aspires to be *persona grata* at the stage-or; for you will never cut much ice back-stage til your -ova's, -ina's and -nsky's are under control. oreover, it is as well to learn a little Russian in case r example, you should ever run across one in the llet Russe. You are probably already familiar ith the famous advice of Sonia Sonovabitch con-rning going to bed with a Russian grammar ; but u must never forget that names which end in -ova ust not be accentuated as such, and that the accent ls on the antepenultimate syllable[2]. This makes nsense of facetious references among the incog-scenti to such favourites as Kantwetalkitova, Hotan-ldalova and the rest, whose names, when correctly ronounced, sound even more improbable.

The Solution

The simplest and most obvious solution to this pect of the language difficulty is to refer to all dancers their Christian names. This is an expedient to hich all the most convinced balletomanes resort, ten on no more legitimate a pretext than that their nt from Tonbridge was once smiled at by Natalie asti in the Ladies at Sadler's Wells, in mistake for iss Caryl Brahms. A useful pointer to a dancer's elebrity is therefore the degree of familiarity with hich his or her Christian name is current in the allery Bar at "The Garden". It is, for the beginner, dangerous business. Balletomanes are quick to seize advantage over a novice, and delight in discomfiting m. Thus an airy and well-timed reference to "Bobby's *llottés*" (see Glossary) may meet with the suspiciously nocent query, "Bobby who?" Many a gin and orange s been quite spoiled that way. You must watch ese points, as Cecchetti was once heard to say to a pil during a demonstration by Rapine.

Aids to Conversation

It is as well to have in readiness a few stock obser-tions for those occasions on which something con-structive is clearly expected, e.g. after a work seen for the first time, or when in conversation with an initiate. For the following suggestions I am indebted to Mr. Kurt Krutch, a familiar figure at first-night parties and a cynic if ever I saw one.

(*a*) 'I did so love the décor". This is a useful red herring which will tide you over until some rasher spirit ventures an opinion on the *dancing*.

(*b*) "Was it my imagination, or was the orchestra just off the beat?" This is more venturesome, but little harm can come of it. Musicians are notoriously erratic, and you will certainly find someone present will agree with you.

(*c*) "She's a lovely dancer, of course, but—*there's something wrong with her hands*". This will certainly start something. It has, of course, no reference to swollen knuckles (though Boris Bovine has the *nastiest* nails, as any of his partners will tell you), but is a purely technical observation implying a close attention to detail and a nice appreciation. It is exactly the kind of remark which prompts somebody else to chime in with: "You know, I've always thought so myself, but never dared say so!" Such moments make the whole anxious business worth-while.

4. Glossary of Useful Terms

(*a*) *Arabesque:* What Eros might just conceivably be doing in Piccadilly Circus if he were not cluttered up with bow and arrows.

(*b*) *A la quatrième devant:* To the fourth front.

(*c*) *A la quatrième derrière:* To the fourth behind.

(*d*) *Attack:* A term of approbation useful for complimenting dancers whose energy outweighs their technique.

(*e*) *Ballottés:* A rocking motion achieved in mid-air, usually with an anxious expression.

(*f*) *Bourrée:* And up she rises.

(*g*) *Lac:* "Swan Lake".

(*h*) *Line* i. See *Arabesque*.

ii. Something shot by people who remember Pavlova.

(*i*) *Sleeping B:* See below.

(*j*) *Sleeping P:* See above.

(*k*) *Temps levés:* Times lifted. Sometimes, as in *Hamlet*, out of joint.

(*l*) *Technique:* Not falling over.

(*m*) *Thump:* Falling over.

(*n*) *Tricorne:* Misleadingly advertised as *The Three-Cornered Hat*. Has to be Massine to be believed.

(*o*) *Zing:* Zing.

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think it was Diaghilev. Or it may have been my Uncle Vladimir. Anyway, it was a stout gentleman with a foreign accent.

For the purpose of this article, Lopokova and Sokolova do not count. And I've never heard of Tchernicheva ! !

BALLET IN NEW YORK, FALL 1948

By ANATOLE CHUJOY

BALLET THEATRE'S announcement of the cancellation of the first half of its season on August 2nd, came as a shock to many people in and out of ballet. But those who were carefully watching the vacillations of Ballet Theatre during the past year or so were not surprised.

Ballet Theatre's 1947-48 tour was anything but well arranged and profitably fulfilled. The spring season at the Metropolitan Opera House last April-May which followed the tour showed a huge deficit, which could have been, but was not, foreseen and modified.

During the season Ballet Theatre announced that it would play its fall season at the City Center, but soon after, the management cancelled the New York fall season and let it be known that it would open in Boston October 4th. A short while afterwards the opening date was postponed to October 27th at Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Finally, on August 2nd, came the announcement about the suspension of the touring season until after the New Year.

NORA KAYE IN BALLET THEATRE'S "FALL RIVER LEGEND"

Whether there actually will be a season after the New Year is difficult to say at this writing. The dancers have been officially notified that they are free to seek other employment, and only Igor Youskevitch, John Kriza and Dimitri Romanoff are still drawing salaries guaranteed by their contracts, which specify a certain annual salary whether the company performs or not.

M. Blevins Davis, a Broadway producer and president of Ballet Theatre Foundation, is endeavouring to collect $200,000 in contributions to make possible the continuation of Ballet Theatre. In her official statement to the press Miss Lucia Chase, director of Ballet Theatre and, to all intents and purposes, its only backer, said that Ballet Theatre would resume only if this sum was collected. This is how the matter now stands.

Meanwhile most of the soloists and *corps* of Ballet Theatre have scattered to find other jobs. How many of them will return to Ballet Theatre if and when Miss Chase decides to resume activity remains to be seen.

* * *

Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo will celebrate its tenth anniversary by playing its New York season at the Metropolitan Opera House for the first time since 1942. The season begins September 18th.

The reason for the anniversary is a sound one. It was ten years ago last February that Leonide Massine broke away from Col. de Basil's Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo (now the so-called Original Ballet Russe) and joined René Blum in Monte Carlo to become artistic director and choreographer of the ballet which was then attached to the Monte Carlo Opera House. Sergei I. Denham became co-director of the new organisation with René Blum, and the company acquired the right to call itself Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo.

The famous London "ballet war" of the summer of 1938, when both companies danced simultaneously in London, one at Covent Garden, the other at Drury Lane, preceded the New York season at the Metropolitan Opera House, under the management of S. Hurok.

Alicia Markova and Mia Slavenska were ballerinas of the company in addition to Alexandra Danilova and Tamara Toumanova. Toumanova did not actually appear with the company in New York, however, because of some intrigues attributed to Serge Lifar, who was one of the *premiers danseurs* with Frederic Franklin and Igor Youskevitch.

To commemorate the anniversary, director Sergei I. Denham has engaged Markova, Slavenska and Anton Dolin as guest artists; invited Leonide Massine to

evive his *Rouge et Noir* and *The Seventh Symphony* and reshen up his *Le Beau Danube* and *Gaité Parisienne*, and gnes de Mille to clean up and appear in her *Rodeo;* nd augmented the *corps de ballet* by some fifteen ancers. It was thought that Mr. Massine might stay o dance a few times in his ballets, but the choreo-rapher had to fill an engagement at the Colon Opera n Buenos Aires and could not remain for the season. Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo announced only one ew ballet for its Metropolitan season, *Quelques Fleurs* y Ruthanna Boris, to a selection of Auber's musical ieces, in décor and costumes by Robert Davison.

The title of the new ballet sounds like the name of a erfume, and this is no accident. It seems that Houbigant is about to reintroduce its pre-war best-elling *Quelques Fleurs* and will run a huge advertising nd publicity campaign to help sell the perfume. Ruthanna Boris' ballet is one of the manifestations of he publicity campaign. The Houbigant people believe that the ballet will lend the perfume a certain glamour and prestige, which might well be the case. At any rate, they are sponsoring the new ballet.

* * *

The Paris Opéra Ballet opens its first New York season September 21st at the City Center. The company will include forty-five dancers and sixteen persons of the administrative personnel, headed by director Georges Hirsch.

New York balletomanes are quite excited about the prospective visit and not quite sure what is in store for them. Nor, apparently, is the company sure of what lies ahead of them. The point is that the Paris Ballet has been used to dancing once a week during their regular season, with perhaps two or three performances a week during July. Here, however, they will have to dance every day—seven performances in six days. How the dancers will take it is something American dancers are interested to see.

ALICIA ALONSO AND JOHN KRIZA IN BALLET THEATRE'S "BILLY THE KID"

Their repertoire consists of fifteen ballets, ten of them by Serge Lifar, which is not the wisest choice for America, artistically or politically.

If one is permitted to speculate, the principal dancers, headed by Yvette Chauviré, Christine Vaussard, Micheline Bardin, Madeleine Lafon, Jacqueline Moreau, Denise Bourgeois, Geneviève Guillot, Roger Ritz, Michel Renault, Alexandre Kalioujny, Max Bozzoni, are almost certain to have a personal success, while the ballets themselves will take second consideration.

* * *

A much less publicised event, which, however, may have important consequences in Ballet here, is the co-operation of Ballet Society with the New York City Opera.

Ballet Society, as you may know, is the non-profit organisation headed by George Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein. Organised in the fall of 1946, the company had two short, but artistically most successful seasons, based on a subscription audience. In these two seasons the company contributed more to the development and appreciation of Ballet in America than both of our commercial companies put together.

In this connection one might mention such Balanchine masterpieces as Mozart's *Symphonie Concertante*, Bizet's *Symphony in C* (which the Paris Opéra Ballet did under the title *Le Palais de Cristal*) and Stravinsky's *Orpheus*, as well as a number of ballets by young American choreographers including Todd Bolender, John Taras, Fred Danieli, William Dollar, presented by Ballet Society.

During the coming season the Ballet Society troupe will become the official ballet of the New York City Opera (not, incidentally, a municipally owned company) at the City Center and will have two performances a week of its own. The fall season is scheduled for eight weeks, the spring season for six weeks.

The opera company will share in the expense of keeping the company. Ballet Society, now known as the New York City Ballet, will thus function on an at least semi-permanent basis. This will lay the foundation for a permanent resident ballet company, a long needed and hoped for institution.

According to present plans, subscribers to Ballet Society automatically become subscribers to the New York City Ballet. They will enjoy certain privileges not accorded to people buying single admission tickets, among them tickets for the premières of all ballets, attendance at stage rehearsals, lectures and motion pictures, etc.

If Ballet Society succeeds in this project, and there is every reason to believe that it will succeed, New York may finally have a ballet company of its own, a long felt ambition of every New York balletomane.

Photograph by Maurice Seymour

FREDERIC FRANKLIN OF BALLET RUSSE DE MONTE CARLO IN "RODEO"

THE GODS COME DOWN TO EARTH

By FRANK JACKSON

RAM GOPAL'S last short season at the Prince's Theatre was, in my opinion, an error of judgment. Only those who had not seen him before could have found in the programme that inexplicable but essential excitement without which dancing becomes mere routine. Because there was nothing new in the programme (the so-called new ballet, *A Legend of Rama*, turned out to be no more than a series of familiar solo items strung together with only the most elementary attempt at creating a complete work) my attention was focused on weaknesses in the company's work which, though present, were certainly not so noticeable when their material had the attraction of novelty.

Nothing I say now is to be taken as disputing the obvious fact that Ram Gopal is one of our greatest living dancers. But an individual talent, even amounting

almost to genius, does not, by itself, make a theatrically effective evening. None of Ram Gopal's dancers, with the exception of Shevanti (whose personality increases in sweetness) and Kumudini (a new and promising addition to the company) is really good enough to appear in support, let alone as soloist. This was only too obvious in the simple Folk Dance numbers and in ensemble work in *A Legend of Rama*. Nor do I think the musicians are of a sufficiently high calibre; their music sounded anæmic even to my ignorant and therefore uncritical ear.

But even if these two departments of the company's work were strengthened, there remain other fundamental criticisms. Production, lighting, stage management—all need much more attention than they received. *A Caribbean Rhapsody* has proved beyond all doubt—if it needed proof—that the theatrical effect of a dance show can be immeasurably heightened by intelligent production and lighting. It is not a matter of expense, of elaborate sets, but of full use of the resources of the theatre. Just once, in the Dance of the Setting Sun, stage lighting was used with some dramatic sensitivity. For the rest, the lighting plot seemed limited to an occasional dimming. No-one would wish the star dancer to attend to such matters himself; there are plenty of experts available—they should be used.

But the thinness of the choreography of ensemble numbers *is* a criticism of the choreographer. In fact, of course, none of the items truly deserves the name of ballet. But even in a programme of dances, some greater variety is desirable. It is just not good enough to bring three or more dancers on the stage only to have them all doing the same steps. Unless my memory plays me false, Uday Shankar was not guilty of the same error. He attempted to make a dramatic as well as a dance point in his works. Perhaps I can make my meaning clearer by saying that Uday Shankar's dances had a beginning and an end. Ram Gopal's merely start and stop; indeed, very often, they do not stop soon enough.

RAM GOPAL WITH HIS PARTNER, SHEVANTI

And, finally, a minor point. I think it is a great mistake for a dancer to speak, to come to earth and reveal himself as human and small as we are. The item in the programme in which Ram Gopal illustrates some of the hand and face gestures of classical Indian dancing is one of the most rewarding in the whole repertoire, but it was not necessary for Ram Gopal to give the commentary himself.

These criticisms might not be valid for someone who completely appreciated the "language" of Indian dancing. It is just possible (though I doubt it) that the thought, the meaning behind the gestures would be so important as to obscure weaknesses which seem so glaring to us who have more superficial understanding and who therefore need more distractions in other directions to keep our attention. It may be that Ram Gopal is giving us credit for more understanding than we possess. Or is it, as some critics have claimed, that he is watering down his work in an attempt to suit Western tastes, thereby losing in force and novelty? Perhaps a little of both.

I would, of course, rather see Ram Gopal here with all these faults than not see him at all, and I have no doubt there are many difficulties in the way of giving us a first rate company of dancers and musicians. This makes closer attention to production and arrangement only more urgent and important.

On not Acting with the Face (*continued from page 8*)

The examples, certainly, are many: the proportion of English dancers (particularly of men) small. Is it partly because custom stales our reaction to our own dancers and the novelty of a new approach electrifies and makes memorable a performance which might itself become flat with familiarity? I think not, and I would place a large part of the blame on our reliance on the expressive face at the expense of the dancer's whole body. Isadora Duncan always maintained that the mainspring of her art was from the solar plexus and Antony Tudor stated in an American press interview that he required an emotional expressiveness in his dancers that originated from the abdomen. The plea for an articulate whole sounds elementary but a misconception of elementals can, after all, undermine all the artifice of a finished product.

THE FOURTH COLLABORATOR

By PAUL TASSOVIN

IT is well known that the making of a ballet is a work of collaboration; the principal collaborators being the choreographer, the composer, and the designer. But there is a fourth collaborator who though of equal importance is frequently overlooked; I speak of the author. The author may be a poet, a dramatist, or a writer of novels; but he is the person who furnishes a plot.

All ballets do not require a plot in the truly literal sense, but at the same time no ballet could exist without a theme, or an idea, any more than it could exist without music* or without dance. It seems to me, therefore that the neglect by present day choreographers of authors, and of literature in general is quite astounding, and it is glaringly apparent that their ballets are the poorer by reason of this neglect.

Doubtless many an ideal ballet has been inspired in the first place by music, (of which the composer is the author) and the choreographer by following carefully the architecture of the music, succeeds in moulding his creation into an organic whole; but, not infrequently a choreographer devises a ballet and afterwards seeks music ready-made to fit his idea. At best this must be considered a hit or miss method, and very often liberties (not always artistically permissible) have to be taken with the musical score to enable the choreographer to achieve cohesion.

By present methods it is quite a normal practice for a composer to be commissioned to compose music for a ballet on a given theme, but apart from the mood and style of the piece, the dramatic construction is left almost entirely to the composer's discretion and if he be a very musicianly musician without any sense of the theatre (and why should he have a sense of the theatre, since that is not his job ?) one need not hazard too many guesses that the result will not be a dramatic masterpiece.

Yet let it not be forgotten that a ballet comes within the category of a dramatic work of art. It is built on climax, or a series of relative climaxes. Therefore to my mind, to build a ballet without a proper scenario is like erecting a house without a plan, or a factory without a frame-work.

Today, choreographers work too often and too much in the blind maze of their own ego. They should not shun help from dramatists and authors who have a wider experience of dramatic construction. I am not however advocating that authors be invited to write ballet scenarios *ad lib.*, or without the closest co-operation with choreographers, composers, and designers; rather I am protesting against the almost complete absence of the writer from ballet creation.

That poets should be the companions of choreographers seems natural. They are brother artificers working in different mediums, but with the same gifts of human instinct and intellect, the same creative germ, the same capacity for emotional expression. The experience of one may well set the other ablaze. The lone creator needs an impetus. Who better could provide the impetus to the choreographer than the chronicler of the divine?

Ballet has, in the past, translated many classics of literature. At one time Greek Mythology was favoured; Biblical themes have often been predominant, and even Shakespeare's plays have been expounded in balletic terms, but seldom has it been considered necessary to seek literary advice in the matter of adaptation, and there lies the oft-times reason for failure to transmute with complete success.

It is only to be expected that raw adaptations of the classics will be less satisfactory than free and tailored versions. A specific work will obviously lend itself to the requirements of terpsichore, rather than a monument adopted lock, stock, and barrel from another world, so to speak.

Bearing in mind these observations it would appear that a very large majority of present day choreographers prefer to work with the merest pretext of a literary plot, and if there is a plot at all, they like to invent it themselves. It would be perhaps too much to expect, and unreasonable to suppose that choreographers should be expert plotters. The results of their labours give evidence of scant abilities in this direction. Too frequently their hackneyed and illiterate efforts expose faults that could only be born of muddled thought. Can they not then be made to realize that the *littérateur* could put into their hands the power to portray more vividly and convincingly?

The shortcomings of our young choreographers would fill many a book, but is it not a pity that a promising artist who has a capacity for composing beautiful *enchainements*; a man who can hear music and create his

*Since this article was written David Lichine has refuted my statement by creating a ballet that is performed in complete silence. The movements and pictures of his work are fastened on to dynamic rhythms which the choreographer holds in his head. The dancer who performs the choreographer's role, is virtually the conductor, and the dancers whom he moulds to his pattern, take their cues from his enactment. To my mind the experiment has considerable plastic merit, and is, at any rate, partially successful, but it might be conceded that in *La Création* Lichine has chosen almost the only possible theme that could be evolved without an accompaniment of co-related sound, and even here "silence" is stretched to its golden limits; so much so, that I thought a piano might have been used with advantage to illustrate the solos. Indeed, the more one thinks upon it, the more one realises that Lichine carries his idea beyond reality. The choreographer does not, in fact, "create in the silence of his mind".

wn interpretation of it; should be left to flounder hrough lack of stage-craft and dramatic knowledge? o possess the creative gift in dance is of rare and emendous worth. It should be cultivated with the tmost care, and not allowed to run to waste.

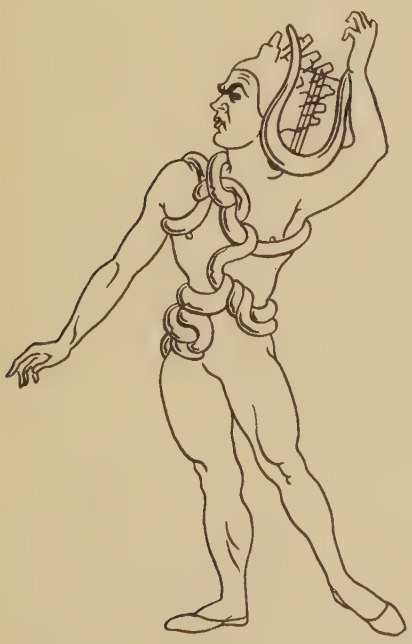
If the fourth collaborator could be introduced at the inception of a new work, what masterpieces might not some of our young choreographers hold in store for us, but left to their own devices, without erudition or sufficient experience they will only be able to serve us with their spontaneous formulæ, which because of the

(*Continued on page 30*)

AN AMERICAN LOOKS AT ENGLISH BALLET

By CATHARINE WHITEHORN

PERHAPS the first difference between the audiences for Ballet in America and in England which is pparent to the visitor from America is the devotion f a London audience to its resident company and its eluctance to admit of the excellences of visiting ompanies. The very temper of the crowd on a night t Covent Garden when Fonteyn is to dance a full-ength ballet is obviously that of a proud parent, whereas here was a sceptical, aloof attitude toward even Markova nd Dolin, and definitely toward the de Cuevas Company which would not be manifest in any American city. One explanation is, of course, that with the exception f the balletomanes in New York City, the rest of us re so glad to see any company which comes our way after no Ballet at all for six to eight months, that we hope for the best and glow with anticipation. Certainly we must be optimists, since we have endured without too much grumbling The Foxholes, The Slavenska, The Markova-Dolin, The Ballet for America, and Massine's Highlights Companies in the past three years. Yet there are, proportionately, a far larger percentage of American ballet-goers outside New York than I venture to think there are in England outside London. And thousands of us cannot make pilgrimages to the New York season as your provincials can to London: it costs too much, and most of us work for a living and cannot time our vacations to the seasons there.



BALLET GUYED (NO. 2)
ANDRÉ EGLEVSKY IN "BRAHMS VARIATIONS"

Such a solid three months of ballet performances as I have been privileged to experience since early June, then, is an unusual state of affairs to an American, whose critical selectivity does not often conquer his desire to see what he can in the two-days-to-two-weeks visit of a company.

There is smoothness, a perfection of group movement, and a feeling that the Company knows what it is doing which strikes one at the first performance one sees of the Sadler's Wells Ballet. No youngster just out of school is going to spoil the picture in *Giselle*; no young soloist who has been dancing in four ballets a night for seven performances a week on the road is going to perform a sloppy Blue Bird variation. Sufficient time and a permanent home are on the side of a well-planned programme and a cleancut performance.

At a second glance one is more acutely aware of the paucity of good male dancing. Massine had departed before I arrived and Helpmann radiates a compelling force but this is done dramatically and not by dancing. I should say that Michael Somes and Alexander Grant were the only dancers whose performances equalled our soloists. On the other hand, Sadler's Wells have leading danseuses to waste. We should be quite pleased if a company offered such fine dancing and charm and individual personality as Pamela May, Elvin, little Anne Negus, Rosemary Lindsay and Beryl Grey alone showed during the week of June 14th; yet you also can fall back on Shearer, Farron and Clayden, and crown a

season with the indefatigable Fonteyn. Little do you actually need to borrow Danilova!

At Covent Garden the theatre itself is an attraction to an overseas visitor; most American theatres in which ballet may be seen are not built in circular tiers opera-house fashion, and there is a visual pleasure in the red velvet curtains, the little pink lamps, the lovely green domed ceiling and the further reaches of the gallery, which make up for some of the ballets which were not so attractive. Certainly the English habit of eating during the intervals at the theatre instead of having to go out is a pleasant one, and at its best at Covent Garden. So rosy a glow is cast by the theatre itself over a performance that I am actually looking forward to seeing Sadler's Wells dance in Edinburgh where I may be able to concentrate on the dancing.

Inevitably one wonders what ballets and what dancers would be most successful in America. Though the New York audience, and possibly the West Coast and Chicago might have an opportunity of seeing the full-length *Swan Lake* and *Sleeping Beauty*, I fear the smaller cities and the mid-western metropolis would have to miss them, because our own companies find the expense of elaborate sets and long distance hauling so enormous.

Probably the ballet which would be most immediately acclaimed would be *Checkmate*, especially if danced by Somes and Pamela May. The décor, choreography and music all are reminiscent of the hugely successful

PAMELA MAY IN "CHECKMATE"
Photograph by John Sharman

Rouge et Noir, and in addition many ballet goers who liked the Jooss *Green Table* and Balanchine's *Danses Concertantes* would find conceptions to admire. When it was properly danced it would take a long time for me to tire of *Checkmate*.

We should be glad to welcome again so fine *Tricorne* as the Sadler's Wells production, and the opportunity to compare either Fonteyn or Elvin with Toumanova and Argentinita.

Symphonic Variations would find an audience at once partly because it is such a splendid display piece for Fonteyn, Shearer and May, but also because it would remind us of *Serenade* and most of Balanchine's more popular recent productions. To my mind it is the most complete and satisfying single ballet I have seen Sadler's Wells perform. *Symphonic Variations*, too would tour well, since ballets for a small number of dancers are always staple parts of our touring programmes and we are accustomed to not more than one ballet demanding the whole company.

Job might also have a great success, but I doubt very much if *Adam Zero*, *Miracle in the Gorbals* or *The Rake's Progress* would mean much to an American audience and I am sure they would find them unpleasant to sit through. You can keep *Clock Symphony*, too; we make some mistakes of our own, like *Bluebeard* without Dolin and *Bacchanale*.

The chief difficulty which would need to be overcome for a Sadler's Wells American tour to be successful is the lack of advance information available about the company. Just as the English ballet ticket purchaser shrugged off the de Cuevas Company having seen only Eglevsky and knowing little or nothing about the other members of the company and their ballets, so most Americans outside New York City (and many *in* New York) look blank at the mention even of Fonteyn and Helpmann, and probably will not have an opportunity of seeing Shearer in glorious Technicolour for another season. Considerable high-pressure movie-style advance publicity, no matter how out of keeping with the dignity of English Ballet would be a necessity if Sadler's Wells were to tour successfully in America. And for amicable cultural relations between our two countries, it cannot be over-emphasised that a mere visit to New York, such as that of the Old Vic Company a year ago, is about the equivalent of a one-week season at Covent Garden—a drop in the bucket. Too many of us would never get to see them, and the conception that the ballet company would get of the United States would be, I fear, extremely misleading.

Londoners are luckier, theatrically speaking, than the inhabitants of any other city, not least in being able to retain a permanent ballet company while attracting visiting companies. It has been a good summer to visit London, and I only regret the absence of the Ballet Rambert.

LES BALLETS DES CHAMPS-ELYSEES

I HAVE to admit that this is being written as much in anger as in sorrow, for there is a point beyond which it is impossible to make allowances. Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées had bad luck again : Nina Vyroubova, so lovely last year in *La Sylphide*, was unable to come, Petit had already left some months previously taking several prominent members of the company with him, Babilée hurt his back before he arrived and strained a leg during the season, and so on. Also the Prince's Theatre has a poor stage for Ballet being very shallow and with a wicked rake, though as for this last, Diaghilev brought a larger company and a bigger repertoire in the old days, and Sadler's Wells produced their full-length classical ballets without appearing inconvenienced; still, we will allow that it is not an ideal theatre. But when all is said and done the fact remains that during this season (August 31st to September 25th) there was far too much to be deplored and only occasional flashes of the enormous pleasure that this Company is capable of giving.

If London ballet goers can find room anywhere in their hearts for a company other than Their Own which reigns at Covent Garden, that corner is certainly occupied by Les Ballets des Champs-Elysées, and for a variety of excellent reasons. They were the first company to visit us after the war, and therefore the first foreign company most of our balletomanes had ever seen. Their best ballets had that kind of unity of taste not seen since Diaghilev. They had *Les Forains*, the most heart-warming ballet for years. They had Roland Petit, an outstanding discovery both as choreographer and dancer; and they had Jean Babilée, the first great male dancer to be seen here since before the war. Reasons enough for an affection which has remained steadfast but which seems to be in danger of becoming stupidly uncritical, for to speak bluntly, the

NATHALIE PHILIPPART AND JEAN BABILÉE IN "LE JEUNE HOMME ET LA MORT"

Action photograph by Roger Wood

slipshod presentation and downright slovenliness on certain evenings would have disgraced a fit-up company of the last century. Irène Skorik's dress in *La Sylphide* was limp and filthy, her shoes in dirty ribbons; one evening Babilée missed his cue in *Le Rendezvous* by a couple of minutes and then strolled in from the wings without make-up and wearing only the hat and jacket of his costume as the Hunchback; portions of costume were constantly littering the stage and the *corps de ballet* habitually prinked their hair, fidgeted with their dresses and talked amongst themselves when not actually dancing. Make-ups were consistently careless—Skorik was a great offender in this.

There were many who, in the foyer, spoke of these things, but no critic in the daily or weekly press has deemed it necessary to express displeasure and I therefore now make this protest in the hope that it may inculcate some sense of responsibility in the management and dancers of one of the most interesting companies of the last twenty years.

Of the new ballets, *Les Treize Danses*, Petit's last work before he left the company, has choreography which perfectly matches the costumes of Christian Dior, both being of an unexampled hideousness. Gsovsky's *Fête Galante*, a rehash of *Concert de Danses* of which nothing now remains except the setting and some of Beaurepaire's costumes, ambles interminably on. We at last had an opportunity of seeing a ballet by Aurel Milloss, but I felt that *Le Portrait de Don Quichotte* needed far more careful presentation than it received. There is a moving idea here of the crazed reader endeavouring to live the Don Quixote legend and failing as lamentably in all his efforts, but the borderline between reality and the fantasy of a diseased mind is not made sufficiently clear and the choreography is not in itself quite interesting enough to compensate for the sense of bafflement. It does at the same time make one wish to see more of Milloss's work created in circumstances more favourable than those which, I understand, prevailed during the making of this one.

Lichine's *La Création* is happily entirely free from the pretentious chi-chi one had feared from advance publicity about the lack of music and décor. It held my close attention throughout and I think would do so at a third or fourth viewing, though I was unable to put this to the test. I cannot see it as being of any major significance but it is extremely well done and Lichine does leave one with a feeling of having gone a little way along the mental path which leads to creation and he has been more successful than most choreographers in presenting abstractions as convincing characters. I felt that there should have been a burst of music at the end as the choreographer climbs the ramp formed by the two practice *barres* and finally sees the way clear before him, for this conclusion is the beginning of the ballet which we do not see.

Of the other ballets in the repertoire, *Les Forains* had suffered too many changes of cast to be anything but a shadow of what we remember with such affection, but Youly Algaroff atoned for his ineffective Ringmaster by the striking intensity of his performance of the doomed young man in *Le Rendezvous*. If only Petit had found some less banal way of presenting the figure of Destiny this would be an outstanding ballet by reason of the atmosphere of reality which it creates out of purely unrealistic material. Kosma's music and Brassai's use of enormously enlarged photographs for his décor are all part of the effect.

Jean Babilée never struck his true form throughout the season and his lack of all sense of duty towards an audience has become more marked. Even so he and Philippart between them continued to perform their miracle in *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort*. The more I see this the more I am convinced that it is the use of Bach's music which makes it into the great work it is. The inexorable majesty of those sounds made to the glory of God, rolling on untouched and untouchable by the sordid tragedies of the little people of this world, has no parallel that I can think of in the whole history of Ballet.

Throughout the season excerpts from the classical ballets in most strange and garbled versions were hurtled through with complete disregard for finish and style by Skorik, with either Jean Guélis or Algaroff as partners. Skorik has all the qualities that go to the making of a great dancer but she has now reached the point in her career when she needs careful guidance and schooling if she is to become a real prima ballerina as opposed to one given the title because she happens to dance the leading roles in a company. The delicate charm she showed in 1946 is becoming overlaid by mannerisms and her very considerable technique is being forced to a degree which frequently lands her into trouble. Guélis jumps very high and beats endless quantities of *entrechats huit* without having much else to offer. Algaroff has the makings of an excellent dancer but also needs to pay attention to the completion of steps. Audiences whom I must kindly suppose had never seen any Ballet before, yelled themselves hoarse and demanded encores for performances which gave some of us acute embarrassment.

All this sounds extremely severe, and indeed I mean it to be, for no improvement can be expected when critics softheartedly dwell only on the good. I will end, however, by paying tribute to Natalie Philippart, not the greatest dancer but in many ways the greatest personality in present-day Ballet. Never for a second is she giving less than every ounce to her performances and her amazing concentration seems to hold together every ballet in which she appears.

P.W.M.

"JEU DE CARTES" WITH JEAN BABILÉE AS THE JOKER

NATHALIE PHILIPPART, YOULY ALGAROFF AND IRÈNE SKORIK IN "LA SYLPHIDE"

THE WARDROBE

"A place where miracles are expected—and taken for granted when they happen". (*A jaded Wardrobe Mistress.*)

By L. GORDON SMITH

ARRIVING early at the theatre, you read your programme while awaiting the raising of the curtain between you and—you hope—enchantment. You have read the cast, and the synopsis of any ballet unknown to you; you have noted the conductor's name and discussed his reputation. Five minutes to go before the Overture. Your glance idly skims over the formidable list of Producers, Artistic Directors, Stage Managers, Machinists etc. Somewhere among them is mentioned the Wardrobe Mistress.

How many members of the audience (and, one sometimes wonders, how many artists!) have ever given a thought to the innumerable crises a Wardrobe Mistress has to meet and conquer in the course of a week, or even an hour? How does a member of the audience picture a wardrobe mistress? If he thinks of her at all, he probably imagines her presiding over a large room full of rows of costumes hanging in alphabetical order, consulting tonight's programme as she leisurely issues beautiful dresses to the dancers before the performance; then sitting down for a quiet cup of tea and a good read until the final curtain, when she collects the costumes back again and, with a light brush to remove a few grains of face-powder, hangs them up in their appointed place until next time.

It is not very much like that!

Let us spend a Monday with the wardrobe mistress of a small touring ballet company. On Sunday she has travelled, possibly from one end of England to the other, and—including the inevitable sojourn at Crewe—this takes the best part of the day. Then comes the dawn of infamous Monday Morning. To the theatre by 10 a.m. to check the baskets, which, with luck, have all arrived safely. Sometimes one goes astray, as lesser luggage is all too prone to do, and the resulting confusion, involving, if all else fails, a consultation with the Director and a complete re-arrangement of the programme, is too horrible to be described!

This Monday she is in luck and there is nothing to do except unpack and iron everything. Just like that! Classical tutus, if carefully packed, do not always need much pressing; but most companies open with *Les Sylphides* or *Swan Lake* (Act II) and needless to say, all the romantic tutus are sadly crushed after a week of use

BALLET GUYED (NO. 3)
BERYL GREY IN "SCÈNES DE BALLET"

and thirty-six hours in a basket. There are, also, all the oddments which simply *must* be washed and hung up on hot pipes with a muttered prayer that they will be dry in time.

There have been sudden changes in the cast and several dancers have to be fitted for alterations; they, of course, being busy with classes and rehearsals, are never available when most needed.

Unpacking reveals a-hundred-and-one little jobs to be done—rents in tarlatan, shoulder straps tearing away, hooks ripped off; nobody ever thinks of reporting such things, so every costume has to be looked over.

There is also a new ballet going on on Thursday and it is not half dressed yet, what with the Board of Trade coupons being held up and the shops never having the right colours in stock, so the wardrobe mistress, who, in addition to being able to keep her temper under stress can also "cut and make", has to try to stay in one place long enough to cut out a few costumes and instruct her assistant on many things before going off to find a few more dancers for fittings.

There was one famous occasion when there had been so many delays in the dressing of a new *pas-de-deux* that the costumes were only begun on the morning of the day scheduled for the première. No-one knew whether it would go on or not. About fifteen minutes before it was due, the ballet mistress asked the *danseur* if he had any news from the wardrobe. His reply was comforting: "I think it will be all right, dear; I was fitted for a sleeve about half-an-hour ago!"

In actual fact he and his partner were sewn into their costumes in the wings as the introduction was being played, and the thread was snapped as their cue came. The dance was a great success, but the wardrobe mistress and her assistant watched it from the wings with their hearts in their mouths for fear they would hear an awful rending sound—and the *danseur* had kept his practice tights on under his costume—in case!

That is an extreme case, but a true one.

At any and every instant between "Ten minutes, please!" and "Beginners, please!" there are shrieks and cries as the tiny and already overcrowded wardrobe is invaded by hordes of dancers who have discovered missing shoe ribbons, hooks etc., most of which they knew about but "forgot to mention". The wardrobe mistress, with outward calm, grows another three pairs of hands and copes with it all. Sometimes somebody says "Thank you!"

After the performance is over and the costumes that will not be needed again have been collected, and a few more troubles and complaints listened to and solved, the wardrobe mistress, after a twelve-hour day, goes back to her supper at her "digs". We hope that it is a good one as our grateful thoughts go with her, for without her hardworking devotion, the show could not have gone on.

A Critic Replies

The Editor, *Ballet Today*.
Madam,

If the critics (and the balletomanes, too) are to abandon the practice of comparing the ballet of former years with present day achievements, what standards does Mr. Drury propose we shall use for the assessment of new works? Not one of its historians (and they represent a wide diversity of viewpoints) claimed that every work of the Diaghilev Ballet was an unfading masterpiece: they mostly had sense enough to see that the ephemeral nature of ballet precludes the creation of "masterpieces"—in the sense that certain musical compositions, paintings and novels are masterpieces. To those of us fortunate enough to make acquaintance with ballet in the period 1909-1929, it was apparent that the greater number of Diaghilev ballets were co-ordinations of music, dancing, décor and production, fused together within the choreographic concept emanating from either Fokine, Massine, Nijinsky, Balanchine or Nijinska. It is this lack of co-ordination so apparent in the majority of modern ballets that perturbs the critic; a lack which is an index of poverty of imagination amongst choreographers.

See foot of col. 1, Page 21.

SOME REPLIES TO CORRESPONDENTS

By ALAN STOREY

You're blasé, but you're not enlightened. You're familiar with everything, but conscious, really, of nothing. What I mean is that you've no imagination.

Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*.

THE letters of Mr. Robert Drury and Mr. Francis Saunders printed in a recent issue of *Ballet Today* have afforded me with so much delight and speculation that I feel it would be discourteous not to reply to some of the points they raise. Mr. Saunders, I suspect, seeks to provoke his fellow balletomanes by comparing ballet, somewhat unfavourably, to football, and no doubt in many cases he will succeed. But I cannot help feeling that he is in a decided minority, that his support is lent (possibly in the true tradition of British sportsmanship) to the losing side. My own impression, formed on recent visits to the ballet at Covent Garden and elsewhere, is that audiences nowadays consist for the most part of an exodus from Highbury and Maine Road; at least the standards on which they base their appreciation and applause appear to be more applicable to the finer points of football than to those of classical dance technique or choreographic construction. An impression, furthermore, which is strengthened by the strong atmosphere of partisanship, or proprietary interest in the home team and thinly veiled antagonism towards visitors who may possibly challenge its artistry and virtuosity. Unfortunately this attitude is not only confined to spectators but has, somehow, communicated itself to the pen of the more irresponsible reviewer. Less harm would be done, I imagine, if a proportion of our balletomanes could be induced to transfer their enthusiasm to the football ground—they would undoubtedly prove to be invaluable at the international events.

Continued from Previous Page.

From the long-distance viewpoint (i.e. the history of ballet in the twentieth century) it is obvious that the achievements of the period 1909-1929 must be the standard by which we measure later works ; for every ballet enterprise in the Western world is a derivation from, or a dilution of, the Diaghilev works, organisation or list of personnel . . . But perhaps Mr. Drury is out to pull the legs of those "critics" who, judging from their exuberance and gay enthusiasm today, were happily occupying their cradles in the years of the final Diaghilev productions in London ?

Yours truly,

A. V. COTON.

However, in spite of my sympathy for Mr. Saunders, I feel obliged to point out that his argument is not only pernicious but æsthetically unsound. Because ballet does not offer the "pure", i.e. non-representational movement he desires he is driven to seek it elsewhere; thus he stands "silent in admiration of a beautifully combined movement, as when a line of forwards moves in an intricate pattern, the ball moving between them . . . "; and, in final justification of his new enthusiasm, he remarks on " . . . the delicate abstract patterns they make, singly and in interaction with each other", and declares, " . . . that is dancing, surely". Possibly, if one stretches the definition far enough; but it certainly is not ballet. Scientists have now proved conclusively that bees communicate with each other through the medium of the dance; animals and birds are known to perform mating dances; human beings crowd into the local *palais* and, at time, produce delicate abstract patterns; but the result is no more a ballet than the words we cry in our exalted moments are a poem, or the conversation overheard in a bar is a play. Movement, as Dr. Charlotte Wolff points out in her remarkable book *A Psychology of Gesture*, is the essence of life, preparatory even to thought; "a preverbal language which starts at birth". Moreover, provided that inner balance and co-ordination are present, it is always graceful and very often beautiful. To a mind sensitive to the innate beauty of motion, a craftsman at his work, the entrance of the beloved into a room, the exquisite action of a batsman making a well-timed stroke, the simultaneous rise and fall of orchestral strings, the meticulous patterns formed by guardsmen on parade, may be the occasion of a supremely enlightening experience. All these things are beautiful in themselves but, as such, are no more than the raw material of artistic creation. Choreography superimposes its own imaginative and significant language of form on this raw material; it must be decorative, not in the sense of a merely eye-pleasing charm or prettiness, but as a rhythmically composed pattern of form and movement. To be of value as a work of art it must itself be beautifully created: a composition that is adventurous; imaginative in terms of gesture and physical grace, linear and spatial evolution, each possessing an individual life, created and organised, and

given meaning by the restrictive bounds of proscenium and stage. As for its relation to nature, whether it be reproductive or released from representative gesture (as in *Choreartium*, *Symphonic Variations*, and other non-representational ballets), this is entirely dependent on the choreographer's vision.

To criticise "the literary and psychological themes used by choreographers", as Mr. Saunders does, is valid only in so far as the criticism is confined to the relation existing between such themes and their media of expression. To quote Dr. Wolff again, "Ideo-motor imitation does not preclude creative discrimination, and every fine and intelligent actor (choreographer and dancer) knows the value of choosing the most characteristic and impressive gestures and omitting those which confuse the essential structure. These powers of deduction and interpretation reveal the great actor (choreographer and dancer), whilst the second-rate artist, in his efforts to be exact in every detail, produces only a dull and lifeless portrait". This is just as applicable to themeless ballets as to dance-dramas; indeed the danger is possibly greater since the æsthetic balance in so-called "symphonic" compositions has altered and consequently is more precarious; the essential is no longer the choreography but the music, and, unless the former is genuinely inspired, giving fresh form and embodiment to the music it accompanies, it will be at best trivially decorative and sterile and, at its worst, an unwarrantable intrusion upon a work of art already complete in itself. My own objection to the use of literary and psychological themes is that in most instances they are artificially contrived, without imagination or true understanding, to satisfy a predominant aspect of popular taste; they have, in other words, simply usurped the position previously held by conventionally handled fairy-tales and myths. When the two are married in *The Red Shoes* ballet the result is a shocking example of bad taste and spiritual poverty. But on the other hand, when the theme is the result of intense feeling and imagination, when the artist is driven by an urgency of expression to create a *Pillar of Fire*, a *Lady into Fox*, *Green Table*, or *Hamlet*, his creative fire is of sufficient intensity to render the most congested and unpromising visual material into an enchanting, delicate filigree of movement, form, rhythm and design, beautiful and satisfying even considered as "pure" or essential movement. Writing of an analogous position in poetry W. B. Honey comments: "A beautiful poem may in this way be composed wholly of elements in themselves 'ugly' or disagreeable. Above all, this essential poetry is creative; it is a result of spiritual adventure and discovery, not the mere reporting of material fact or argument about it, or the 'imaginative' description of fanciful happenings. It is the creation of symbols momentarily charged with an inarticulate and super-rational meaning . . . " When a critic is obliged to extol the qualities of "taste", "chicness", "style" etc., in a composition, it is all too likely that the work is otherwise lacking in true distinction. Such qualities are concomitant to a great work of art and are seldom if ever the result of conscious striving on the artist's part. As Kurt Jooss once declared, and his dictum is more appropriate now than at any other time during the past twenty years, "Questions of style are but of secondary concern. There is only one essential discrimination: whether or not there is true art, giving adequate form to genuine human expression". However, if Mr. Saunders remains unrepentant and unconvinced by these authorities and examples, I recommend him finally to Ram Gopal; in the work of this great artist and his disciples he will at least discover that thematic dancing may express not only the inarticulate and super-rational but, at the same time, achieve a beauty of "pure" movement at present beyond the reach of our western dancers and choreographers—and, I might add, beyond that of the finest forward line of any first division eleven.

And now, if Mr. Drury (or anyone else) is still with me, I will join him for a few lashes at a long dead horse. " . . . it is time", he complains, "that critics and balletomanes alike abandoned the habit of comparing the ballet of the Diaghilev era with present day ballet . . . the balletgoer of the 1920's saw ballet with all the enthusiasm of youth and novelty, he is more staid and critical when he sees ballet today . . . " Someone, it seems, has piqued Mr. Drury—I wonder who ? Not the critics surely, for few of them are old enough to recall the Diaghilev era with clarity, and those who do, think too highly of their discretion or popularity to indulge in a continual flow of recriminations. Apart from this, I disagree entirely with Mr. Drury's assumption that criticism is symptomatic of a mental hardening of the arteries. In number eight of the first volume of *Ballet Today* I wrote the following: "The essential fundamental equipment of a critic is simply, an intuitive critical faculty. He may, in the course of time, acquire a wider technical knowledge and a more extensive theatrical experience based on recollection, comparison etc.: but, unless he instinctively knows good from the indifferent or the bad, unless he can discriminate between rare inner rapture and contagious mass excitement, unless he possesses complete detachment, he is not a fit critic . . . " Possibly Mr. Drury may also recollect the late James Agate's indignation when told that his frequent references to Irving in assessing present day performances were invalid because they were founded on youthful enthusiasm and immature judgment. He replied that familiarity with present day standards of acting confirmed rather than condemned his early opinions of Irving, Bernhardt, and their lesser satellites. And just as anyone, provided he is naturally clear-sighted and acquainted

with a rudimentary knowledge of ornithology, can tell a hawk from a handsaw when the sun is behind him, so anyone with a class-room knowledge of the classical technique and Spessivtseva behind him can differentiate between a prima ballerina and the dancer of promise. If the critic is not to draw comparisons with the past how can he fairly judge the ballet of his period? By what standards? By the volume of applause afforded by youthful enthusiasts? In that case a recording apparatus must soon be installed in Covent Garden and the Gaumont State Cinema, Kilburn, and the critic go hang himself.

Many of us remember the first, second and third seasons of the De Basil Ballet; remember too the hopes and enthusiasms they roused, the ecstatic welcoming of new ballets and new dancers. The years have passed by and the enthusiasms with them; we have seen many of those ballets fall into deserved obscurity; their dancers lost before their promise was fulfilled, or over-developed to a point from which they have not the artistry to return and survive. Only last year De Basil returned with the remnants of his venture to London; it was a sad occasion wherein we learned how much our old pleasures were founded on hope rather than achievement; the embers we once blew with the full blast of our lungs are now no more than ashes, and we realise with finality that the phoenix failed to rise. The lesson here for Mr. Drury, and all who share his views, is clear: think hard, in the future, before you clap too long, or before you herald this dancer or that as the greatest of all time; try to understand that more is required of a ballerina than virtuosity before you dismiss a Markova or a Danilova with uncomprehending shrugs or polite applause. Remember instead the grey ashes of an untended fire; remember that age and experience will conveniently forget the worthless and remember only the outstanding. The Diaghilev era, Mr. Drury, is still with us because we cannot forget it. Time is a strange arbiter—he carries a two-edged sword.

VAKHTANG CHABUKIANI, FIRST SOVIET DANCER

By ELENA ROSLAVLEVA

THE Leningrad season of 1947-48 ended with tremendous news which resounded far in Moscow—Chabukiani started dancing! Ballet critics and connoisseurs hurried to Leningrad and held their breath—would the Chabukiani they were going to see be the unique dancer of the pre-war days? Was not the story of his miraculous recovery after a small operation too exaggerated?

What they saw exceeded the boldest expectations. Not only was Chabukiani in excellent form and absolutely equal to his own formerly unprecedented standard as a dancer, but everyone agreed that he had become deeper and more mature as an artist. In his youth his dancing might have lacked a certain tremor, a certain depth of feeling. It was emotional in its own way. Starting with a *forte* and ending in a brilliant *fortissimo*, his dance was full of bravado bordering at times on "showing off". When he performed *tours* or his special "*grande pirouette à la seconde*" one could hardly watch the impetuous whirlwind of the turns. He acquired an *aplomb* equal to that of Vaganova-trained ballerinas. To the classical technique acquired after Leningrad tuition he added his inherent Georgian and personal *joie de vivre*, will power, the feline softness in completing a high jump.

It is interesting that Chabukiani had very little tuition as a dancer. Born a poor Tiflis boy, he became interested in dancing when in the early 'twenties a popular Italian teacher, Marie Perrini, opened a school in Tiflis. At about the same time Mordkin gave a series of concerts in Tiflis, and left an indelible impression on the young boy. He started looking into the windows of Perrini's class and rehearsing the movements in the courtyard. One can't explain how—he obviously had it in him, but he performed them all with the greatest ease. Perrini heard of him and allowed him to attend her classes free of charge. He had only two years with Perrini. She was strictly Italian school and tried to develop a rather rigid virtuosity in her pupils at the expense of elevation. Chabukiani then went to Leningrad on the advice of some friends. There he had two years tuition under Semenov at the so-called "Evening courses" at the Leningrad School of Choreography. These courses were intended for those who had not started training at an early age, and were not considered fully answering the require-

ments of the Kirov Theatre Ballet. After two years Chabukiani was transferred to the regular day ballet school, where he did one year under Ponomarev. Thus he has to his credit five years of assorted training which would have ruined anybody but himself. His friends say laughingly that anyway he was what he became from the very beginning. Of course Leningrad did supply Chabukiani with a more sure technique, particularly as far as *temps d'élévation* were concerned. While not being actually Vaganova's pupil he quickly acquired her method of helping oneself with one's arms during flights and *tours*.

His brilliant career developed in the early 'thirties. He appeared in the leading parts of all the new Leningrad ballets—*Katerina*, *Flame of Paris*, *Lost Illusions*, *Taras Bulba*, etcetera, and composed two major ballets of his own—*Heart of the Hills* which still remains the "ceiling" both for Chabukiani as choreographer and for the use of folklore in Soviet Ballet, and *Laurencia*, after Lope de Vegas' *Fuente Ovejuna*, a heroic ballet done almost entirely in dance idiom. Chabukiani has been twice awarded the Stalin prize—once before the war, and another last spring for his latest ballet *Sinatle*. When he developed knee trouble during his stay in Tiflis in wartime, he devoted himself to building up the Georgian Ballet, and has done a tremendous work, virtually creating anew ballet training in Tiflis. In all he suffered his ailment for five or six years, and tried every kind of suggested treatment without any substantial results, until an ordinary practitioner suggested having his tonsils out. He did and the pain and swelling of joints disappeared.

When he saw me in the Hotel Astoria, overlooking the magnificent St. Isaac's Square in Leningrad, he was extremely modest and said he could yet hardly realise his leg had been cured and expected to be in much better form by the autumn, when he intends to dance both in Moscow and Leningrad.

As a matter of fact, while there is no doubt that by the autumn he will be in better training, now that he is physically fit his body and his superb limbs, responsive, well trained, still take care of the line and technique and produce a true feast for the eye. He was and still is the picture of manliness and the great beauty of a healthful body and mind. Time has merely added the wisdom of knowledge. His dance as a whole has acquired a new quality and become more reserved. The fact that some of the *fortissimo* impetuousness has gone only improves his style. What we are now witnessing is a mature artist.

When Chabukiani appeared on May 18th in *Giselle*, after some seven years' absence from the Kirov Theatre stage, the audience, delighted to have its favourite back, gave him a great ovation. This grew into a storm of applause when Chabukiani started unfolding the traditional part of Albrecht before them. His pupil and *première danseuse* of the Tiflis (Tbilisi) Opera, Vera Zignadze, whom he brought to Leningrad on this visit, was a graceful and fragile Giselle.

On the 25th of May he danced *Don Quixote*, again with Zignadze. In this he proved that his technique and brilliant showmanship had not deteriorated in any way. This old classical testing ground may be tolerated only in case of a truly excellent performance and Chabukiani excelled in the traditional *pas de deux*. It is little known that the *Don Quixote pas de deux* as it is now danced on the Soviet stage was introduced by Chabukiani. It is a usual thing with him—whatever he dances, is always done in his own version or interpretation, and later this version "grows into" the ballet. Such was the case with the *Flame of Paris* and *Giselle* on the Leningrad stage. In *Don Quixote* there are many parts of Chabukiani's, notoriously that of the middle section of the *pas de deux*.

In the *Flame of Paris* coda he performed a series of brilliant *chainés* in a circle, and did a *double saut de basque* ending it on his knee. Not only was this technically difficult *pas* excellently performed, but nobody has succeeded since in reaching the same degree of fusion of impetus and grace of movement.

The third ballet *Bayaderka* (*La Bayadère*) (Petipa, music by Minkus) with Chabukiani's participation opened on June 5th in an atmosphere of a festive night of a première. The ballet, of which I intend to write at greater length on another occasion, had been resumed after a long interval earlier in the season. And yet Chabukiani's appearance made it into another revival.

Besides filling the traditional role of the warrior Solohr in this naïve pseudo-Indian ballet with much of his personality, Chabukiani had, as usual, elaborated on the traditional network of Petipa, whose variations may always be fitted to the executor, and, as a matter of fact, were intended for that purpose. Chabukiani does not like repeating old patterns. Among many new touches he composed a variation for himself which is worth repeating here—*cabriole en arrière*, done in a circle alternatively with *jétés*, *balancé*, *ballonné*, *pirouettes en dedans* with a halt *en arabesque* and *from* the *arabesque* once more a *pirouette* with the same leg. There is no pause—he just stops for a split second *en arabesque*, registers the pose, "opens" the leg, and again starts a new *pirouette*.

Chabukiani had also composed in this ballet a new adagio for himself and Dudinskaya—the Bayadère or temple dancer Nikia,—in the first act, with many original poses and combinations.

The whole ballet, thanks to the presence of Chabukiani and the absolutely first-class performance of the *corps de ballet* which does a masterpiece of its own in the "Apparitions" scene, passed at an extremely high level of artistry and execution. Solohr's part does not contain much hard classical dancing as such—this,

THE DANCE OF THE VEILS

TWO SCENES FROM "SINATLE"

RAMAZ (T. SANADZE) AND AVTANDIL (V. CHABUKIANI) AT THEIR COMING-OF-AGE CELEBRATIONS

no doubt, explains the fact why Chabukiani revised and complicated the variations, but it is difficult to find one, barring of course his own ballets such as *Heart of the Hills*, to which Chabukiani adds so much of his own personality.

Chabukiani appeared twice in *Bayaderka* and left for Tiflis. He told me he does not plan to abandon entirely the Tiflis Ballet which has become too much a part of himself. In December he hopes to show a revival of his own ballet *Laurencia* on the stage of the Tiflis Opera and Ballet Theatre. He will also resume *Giselle*, produced at Tiflis by himself last season, and *Sinatle*—his latest work, awarded the Stalin prize.

Sinatle is in a way a departure from the active themes which interested Chabukiani, since it is a fairy-tale. But it is only at first glance. *Sinatle* is a story about the victory of Light over evil forces, and the heroic theme is very strong in the ballet, built on Georgian folklore. It is interesting that the beginning of the story has a bearing on *The Sleeping Princess* probably simply because fairy tales often have so-called "travelling subjects".

The story of *Sinatle* starts in the kingdom of the childless Georgian king Djimsheer. Davrish, a Georgian species of a devil, promises to grow him two sons by power of magic, provided he gives up one at the end of eighteen years. Two cradles appear on the stage.

The second scene is eighteen years later. The birthday and coming of age of the two princes—Avtandil and Ramaz—is being celebrated in the palace. Davrish appears and lures Avtandil away to his underground kingdom. There Davrish, with the help of his daughter Mzetunakhavi, a wicked fairy, charms Avtandil and turns him into his own kind.

He wants Avtandil to get for him Light, which can be obtained only with human hands. Avtandil fights against the temptations (represented by beautiful maidens dancing) for a long time, but in the end he is charmed by Davrish.

The Good Fairy (principal ballerina part) then appears. She leads Avtandil out of Davrish's kingdom, and gives him Light, so that he can return to his own land and save it from the Dragon which has encircled the walls of the capital. After a brief fight with the Dragon, Avtandil wins. There is a celebration and reunion with Avtandil's brother Ramaz and fiancée Neavi.

Chabukiani uses in this ballet both classical and purely Georgian steps. He has not achieved the same degree of merging one into the other as in the *Heart of the Hills*,—his masterpiece, but the ballet has a wonderful new "Khorumi" or Georgian hunt dance,—Chabukiani's second version of the Khorumi after *Heart of the Hills*. The first was a dance expressing rebellion. The *Sinatle* Khorumi, danced by twenty men in celebration of the Princes' birthday, is a festive dance, a demonstration of prowess and skill.

When Chabukiani composed a dance in classical idiom for the "fairy scene" of the ballet, he made his fairies sit down as Georgian women do, and gave them Georgian movements for the arms.

The choreographic climax of *Sinatle* comes in the scene of Avtandil's enchanting by Davrish. His aim is to turn Avtandil into his own likeness. This happens on the stage before the audience.

Avtandil's variation from one correct in line and plastically smooth gradually becomes wilder and wilder. His hands begin to grow claws. In the middle part of the variation Avtandil still fights this condition. He tries to straighten himself. And the *grande pirouette à la seconde* in which Chabukiani always excelled comes here not as a virtuoso trick as it does in *Don Quixote*, but as a logical development of the action. With his extended rapidly turning leg, Avtandil tries to cast the evil spirits away from himself. This *grande pirouette* was the only technically difficult step in Avtandil's part. It is interesting that Chabukiani intended to dance the part of Davrish the devil and gave him many difficult movements and jumps. He was later obliged to take the part of Avtandil when he started having his knee trouble, and assigned Davrish to Zurab Kikaileshwili—his able pupil, possessing excellent *ballon* and elevation. Now he intends to revise the part of Avtandil and give it, particularly in the above-mentioned variation, more jumps.

F. MINSKAYA AS MZETUNAKHAVI, Z. KIKAILESHWILI AS DAVRISH AND CHABUKIANI AS AVTANDIL IN "SINATLE"

Vakhtang Chabukiani is dreaming of doing a modern Soviet ballet next—provided he finds the right "book" and music. Shortly before the war he was burning with desire to make *Othello* into a ballet. He did quite a bit of preliminary study with his great friend, the talented stage designer Soliko Virsaladze. Now the interest has dwindled. He feels it is much more imperative to do something connected with contemporary Soviet times. As a true artist, he has already started doing sketches, which may later only indirectly appear related to the yet unexistent new contemporary ballet, but which present, in a rather symbolic manner, contemporary themes.

Such is his new concert number *In Bondage* about a war prisoner.

Now that he has completely recovered as a dancer, we hope he does not give up his valuable searches as choreographer. Chabukiani never builds his work on "quotations" from other creations. He composes only in dance idiom because he knows no other. He dances as the bird sings. It is his nature. In his work he has persistently tried, though not always succeeded, never to pour new wine into old bottles.

It is almost certain that Chabukiani is destined to find the answer to the most difficult problem of modern ballet—how to make it contemporary and yet thoroughly ballet. It seems virtually true that the answer lies in the direction of finding new containers for the new wine—in other words entirely new movements. Chabukiani is endowed with everything to do this.

DUNHAM, AMAYA, MASSINE, de VALOIS, UNCLE TOM COBLEIGH AND ALL!

By FRANK JACKSON

THE tumult and the shouting has died and we can now look back on the Katherine Dunham and Carmen Amaya shows with the necessary tranquillity for critical evaluation.

Does anything remain? Or, once the strangeness and ferocity of the first impact has worn off, is there nothing solid left? Dunham's *Caribbean Rhapsody* leaves a stronger impression than Carmen Amaya, but both have certainly more to them than effervescence.

The first thing that strikes the unpedantic ballet-goer—indeed almost physically—is the intense energy both companies put into their work. The energy of *Caribbean Rhapsody*, at first sight more abandoned, was, in fact, much more under control and more directed to a dramatic purpose than Amaya's and, naturally, there is no particular artistic value in a display of energy as such. But things have come to such a pass here, with our own dancers behaving for the most part as though they would far rather be in bed, that this vitality seemed of itself a virtue.

So far have things gone in this respect that when the Metropolitan Ballet, in their London summer season, danced *Prince Igor* as though it didn't matter (whatever mama said) whether they sw . . ted or not, London's critics were astonished into inordinate praise.

The reason for our non-violence is unclear. Is it the rations? The Government's foreign policy? The lack of serious competition? Or the unfortunate fact that ballet has become the preserve of Suburbia which exalts surface good manners at the expense of everything else, and thus reduces life to a polite inanity? Our dancers are quite capable of dancing as if fully awake, and the trouble, I am inclined to think, lies largely with the audiences which, criminally indiscriminate, applaud good, bad and indifferent alike—so why should the dancers bother?

And how good it was to see men and women on the stage! Sex there certainly is in our ballets, but it is most often frustrated and then, in general, a thing of the mind and not the body. Our own male dancers are, therefore, either little more than props for ballerinas or wan Freudian Romantics without a drop of blood in their veins. This, it is true, has the virtue of making our ballet suitable for school-children.

It is no solution for our dancers to start quivering their thighs like Katherine Dunham or shaking their shoulders like Carmen Amaya. We must, somehow or other, find an English way of dancing as males and females. In fact it is already found, as I discovered at a recent Folk Dance Festival at Albert Hall, where the male dancer took once more his rightful dominant place without that nauseating hip-waggling which passes in musicals for tropic abandon among our more revolting chorus boys.

It is interesting that one notable exception to the sexual neutrality of our ballets is Massine's *Three-Cornered Hat*. The Miller and his wife are as real a man and woman as you could wish to find. Perhaps it would not be out of place to remember the strong influence on this masterpiece of Spanish folk dancing. But it is no use going to extremes and imagining that folk dance steps alone can restore virility to our dancing, or *Job* and *Checkmate* would be our most exciting ballets. This influence must be transmuted through an intelli-

gence sensitive to drama, as Katherine Dunham has transmuted her scientifically studied Caribbean dances to the purpose of stage effect.

Just as we have excluded sex from our ballet, so we have forgotten all about its religious and magic origins. These were not much in evidence in Carmen Amaya's show, though some of the items had a strange nose-thumbing flavour as of an attempt at Black Mass. But magic played a large part in *Caribbean Rhapsody*. There was, of course, the Shango; but I found even more effective the central scene in the ballet *L'Ag'ya*, in which the villain visits the witchdoctor who is discovered surrounded with attendant Zombies. This was one of the most terrifying things I have ever seen on the stage. Some of the terror was due to the magnificent lighting, but there was a residue unaccountable for, except by the fact that Katherine Dunham got right under our civilised façades and touched something scared and primitive in us.

I had a similar feeling at the Folk Dance Festival during the Abbots Bromley Horn Dance, in which a line of antlered figures moved across the vast arena, led by a violin, and fought out in weird half-light, the eternal battle between good and evil, reason and passion, fertility and death.

Caribbean Rhapsody scored heavily over Carmen Amaya in stagecraft. Amaya's sets were poor—unimaginative, unhelpful to the dancers. Her orchestral arrangements, too, were so banal as often to sound like Palm Court of a wet Sunday. Dunham made no such mistakes. Not that her stage effects were elaborate. They were simplicity itself:—mostly a cyclorama and background of steps. But she has an eye for telling detail, for the blending of colours in her costumes, for the effects of stage lighting. With similar artistic care and invention Carmen Amaya could have doubled the effect of her dancing.

We, too, could learn from *Caribbean Rhapsody* in this respect. But, of course, stagecraft is not everything, or *Adam Zero* would be a far more important work than it is.

No-one would wish to pretend that either of these dance shows has the infinite possibility of human expression which ballet gives us. They were limited in artistic scope as in dance technique. Yet it would be equally foolish to deny their great virtues and to ignore the important lessons they can teach us.

KATHERINE DUNHAM AND VANOYE AIKENS DOING THEIR "BLUES" NUMBER IN "A CARIBBEAN RHAPSODY"

Balletomane's Bookshelf

PROACH TO THE BALLET. By A. H. Franks. ir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd. 21s. net.)

In his preface, Mr. Franks states with some firmness at he believes "that not one single sentence in this ok bears even a passing resemblance to profundity". ithout presuming to contradict him, I should like to d a rider to the effect that such infinite good sense is a ore than satisfactory substitute. Mr. Franks's own proach to the Ballet has clearly been with love mpered by the eager determination to acquire owledge and he now passes on the benefit of his own perience to those following in the same path. His rmindedness is everywhere evident, and though it just possible to discern his own preferences where rtain types of works are concerned, he steadfastly fuses to be didactic on any point at all. If one casionally feels that it would be stimulating to be le to disagree violently with him and that he errs on e side of over-kindness in some directions, such nuine broadmindedness about an art so extremely ntroversial as Ballet has a very real value. I do not lieve there could possibly be a better book than this r the newcomer, and to all its other merits must be ded, the beauty of its make-up. The trouble taken er this is fully justified by the result. "Approach to e Ballet" is an outstanding production in every way.

OBERT HELPMANN ALBUM. (Stage and Screen ess Ltd. 7s. 6d. net.)

This has undoubted "fan" value, but it might have d much more than that. A little more care in the mpilation could have made it into an invaluable cord of fifteen years of a unique career. The list of lpmann's achievements given on the last page is a ggering one, though I think it would have looked en more striking arranged year by year instead of habetically; yet almost all the photographs are cent ones and there is nothing of his early appearances ith Markova, *The Haunted Ballroom*, *A Wedding Bouquet*, *eckmate*, mentioning only a few of his successes at ndom. How interesting it would have been to ntrast an early photograph of The Rake with the w one here given, and the same with many of his her roles. Pre-war photographs are still easily tainable and we would gladly have sacrificed two of e three pages devoted to *The Red Shoes* and all the ssip column nonsense in order to trace a great reer to its maturity. The *Giselle* pictures, though ted 1937 are both of the latest Covent Garden oduction and so are the Satans, and so it goes on. cidentally the picture captioned *Nocturne* on Page 10 of *Apparitions*. Arnold Haskell pays tribute to Helpann as dancer and choreographer, and Alan Dent rites of him as an actor, the photographs for this section being the most striking in the book. Finally, if Helpmann's prowess as mimic is worthy of going on record it is as well to get facts and figures right. It was in *Swinging the Gate* at the Ambassadors in 1940 that he obliged with his astounding impersonation of Margaret Rawlings (and his almost equally brilliant Isabel Jeans and Margaret Rutherford, not in *Stop Press* in 1935.

BALLET GUYED (NO. 4)
ROBERT HELPMANN IN "THE SLEEPING BEAUTY"

BALLET-HOO. By Nicolas Bentley. (Michael Joseph, 6s. net.)

Unlike George Third,
What a good thing Nicolas Bentley occurred.

The above being prompted by the fact that Clerihew Bentley's little boy is at it again. In other words, "Ballet-Hoo" "revised from top to toe" is back with us. To we remaining and ageing few with years of ballet-going tucked under our belts before the last war removed all possibilities of tucking anything else the fun is as good as ever, but I am not quite sure about the recent comers. I *hope* they will cotton on to all the allusions but I am just a little doubtful. Can Irina Fallova and Michael Youpushoff mean very much to the balletomane whose brief encounter with alleged Russian Ballet can hardly have inspired him either with admiration or any desire to see more of it? Gazing with undimmed wonder at the immortal Serge Pantz in Southern Railway, I yet must reflect sadly

that male dancers don't come in that build any more. Even that piece of Tchaikovskian liver will merely cause bewilderment to a generation that knows not Adrian Stokes. For though as much nonsense as ever is written about Ballet it is a different kind of silliness, and where once it was rooted in genuine knowledge, today it is a fungus growth on the tree of criticism, which last remark would seem to lend itself to another of Mr. Bentley's illustrations. All the same, Nicolas Bentley is still as wise as he is witty (though perhaps it needs an identical taste to find him so since it is easy enough to bear the wringing of someone else's withers), and I expect to see some brisk exchanges over a sole remaining copy in the bookshop between one of the old brigade anxious to renew acquaintance and some newcomer who wants to find out what we have been laughing about all these years.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CLASSICAL BALLET. By Agrippina Vaganova. (A. & C. Black Ltd. 8s. 6d. net.)

This is the English edition of the Anatole Chujoy translation which appeared in America some eighteen months ago under the title "Fundamentals of the Classical Ballet". There is really nothing to add to Miss Ninette de Valois' foreword with its opening sentence—"Madame Vaganova has written a work that should be found on every dancer's bookshelf". The book is packed with sound advice which is the result of years of practical experience and which is applied to wider issues than the actual execution of steps, though these are explained and illustrated with wonderful clarity. Professor Vaganova is concerned almost entirely with the classical technique as it applies to the *danseuse* for, as a woman, she would not ever in Russia be directly in contact with the training of the male dancer, but even here she manages to get in some good advice, particularly as regards partnering. I had forgotten, until this edition came into my hands, that Vaganova obviously does not agree with the modern habit of taking one hand away when supporting a ballerina in *pirouettes*, and the recent wonderful partnering by Eglevsky and Skibine at Covent Garden would seem to confirm her insistence that the girl turns between her partner's hands. The other superficially more spectacular way can only be effective if the girl can absolutely be relied on *never* to fall away by the slightest degree in any direction. This is only one small example of the wisdom with which this book is crammed.

The only thing that worries me in connection with its sale to the general public is that it *is* so lucid that we may all be in for a fresh burst of ballet jargon in the foyers. I hereby give warning that the first person I hear talking of a *Sissone fermée en écarté an avant* will be felled by a blow from my copy of Mr. C. W. Beaumont's "Complete Book of Ballets". But here criticism ceases and admiration takes over.

THERE'S MONEY IN DANCING. By Rose Tenen (Vawser & Wiles (London) Ltd. 6s. net.)

Miss Tenent has written a very sensible little boo giving all kinds of information covering all kinds dancing, the type of training, probable cost and prospec of each. She does not pretend that there are fortun to be made by everyone, and indeed one comes to th conclusion that, for the majority, shorthand-typin would be rather more lucrative, and for this reaso what she has to say is all the more useful. When sh comes to Ballet, Miss Tenent cites a number of th well-known schools and gives a clear picture of the co for professional training but she also, perhaps u wittingly, leaves the impression that all dancers ha to go through the R.A.D. grades, which is not s Finally, ballet dancing is a vocation rather than a care and a child will normally have been training towar that end for several years before any idea of it as possible money maker will have entered its head.

P.W.M

Editorial Comment (continued from page 3)

music composed by Prokofiev for the Soviet balle He has, however, made a number of cuts and th English version will be in two acts so that it will l about the length of *Giselle*. *Cinderella* will have a déc by the French artist, Malclés, and as our first, lon modern, classical ballet is looked forward to wi even more than the usual anticipation.

Helpmann's return is as a regular member for least one more season, not as a guest artist as has be necessitated during the past year owing to his film an stage work. He has a busy time ahead, for apart fro *Don Juan* there are to be revivals of *Apparitions* an *A Wedding Bouquet*. His own new ballet, the lo talked of *Corrobborree*, is also due next year.

By the time this magazine appears it will probab have been confirmed that Markova and Dolin will joining the Metropolitan Ballet in November and th Dolin will mount *Giselle* for the company.

P.W.M

The Fourth Collaborator (continued from page 15)

nature of it, and because of their individual limitatio will in almost every case be lacking in completeness perfection.

When the fourth collaborator shall be acknowledg and permitted his rightful place in the scheme ballet-making, I venture to think that he will eventua become known as the first collaborator, because effect he will be the draughtsman who will bring abo the foundations of a more mature, and totally sufficie art; and if that ideal state is ever achieved, no bal however conceived will reach fruition without his ai

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The photograph by Duncan Melville on the cover is of "Night Shadow" by the de Cuevas Grand Ballet de Monte Carlo.

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